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Soldier

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SOLDIER POETS

SONGS OF THE FIGHTING MEN

FROM THE FIRST REVIEW OF THE FIRST EDITION

"... The book is a garland, half woven and sufficient to itself, which will hang gallantly and graciously, a singular proof of spiritual efflorescence, on the trophy of the greatest of all British victories to be set up by the Muse of History (a Muse indeed, not a scientific sifter of the dust of circumstance!) in the coming years of well-earned rest. The poems which have been twined together are a bright and never-fading rebuke to the futile and forgotten stuff of 'The half-men with their dirty songs and dreary.' ... The love of their own land, so far transcending all 'ics and 'isms (even the 'patriotism' of the conscious patriot) which is at the root of the New Army's valiant devotion, is magnificently expressed. ... A treasury of remembrance which all must read who would know the soldier's hidden heart."—THE MORNING POST.

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S**OLDIER POETS**

SONGS OF THE FIGHTING MEN

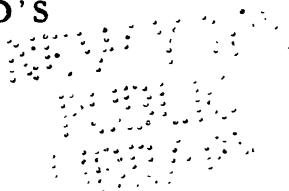
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NOW READY

A SECOND SERIES OF SOLDIER POETS

MORE SONGS OF THE FIGHTING MEN

UNIFORM WITH THIS EDITION

144pp. 42 CONTRIBUTORS

Preface

THIS volume has grown out of a suggestion made by a firm of booksellers who were inspired by a letter in *The Times* in April last, headed "Soldier Poets," which directed attention to the fine spirit animating the poems by Corporal Streets, whose sonnet "Gallipoli" had appeared a few days previously. Slowly and without effort the scheme of the volume has matured and several distinct features have evolved.

Although this representative collection is not an anthology—it consists of work hitherto unpublished in volume form of a number of "soldier poets" brought together within one cover—the contents have assumed a certain homogeneity. They define, record and illustrate the aspirations, emotions, impressions and experiences of men of all ranks and branches of the Army, and they reveal a unity of spirit, of exultant sincerity and unconquerable idealism that makes the reader very proud and very humble. And if some of them deal with home themes by way of solace amid the horrors of war, the poems are essentially war poems, revealing the soul of the soldier going into battle, describing

Preface

incidental scenes, focusing the feelings, both individual and general, of a unique body of fighting men. For one may claim that this volume represents the soldier as poet rather than the poet as soldier. It is typical of that intensification of feeling and concentration of expression developed by military service in the defence of country under extraordinary conditions which have yielded a surprising volume of fine poetry. "I know of no one to compare him to but the Archangel Michael" was said of the poet-paladin Roland. The noble Achilles of the West has to-day many brave peers who face battle with a song, Michaels and Rolands of civilization.

Any objection that, since practically all men of active age have been drawn into the Army willy-nilly, the term "soldier poet" is ambiguous, has already been met. { Even a cursory glance at this volume will show that the authors are soldiers whose military service dates back in most cases to the early days of the war, if not earlier, and not conscript poetasters who have found a new stimulant to jaded literary exercises. The note of pessimism and decadence is absent, together with the flamboyant and hectic, the morose and the mawkish. The soldier poets leave the maudlin and the mock-heroic, the gruesome and fearful

Preface

handling of Death and his allies to the neurotic civilian who stayed behind to gloat on imagined horrors and inconveniences and anticipate the uncomfortable demise of friends.

What seem to me to be the characteristics of this volume give it more than a literary and temporary value. When the history of these tremendous times comes to be written, the poetry of the period will be found to be an illuminating index and memorial. And the historian will be least able to neglect the poetry of the camp and the battlefield, which reflects the temper and experiences of our great citizen army. The spirit that has turned our soldiers into poets is the spirit of the V.C.—brave and debonair, but neither melancholy nor mad. It is not a new spirit, but a new bright efflorescence—a survival and a revival. “The half-men, with their dirty songs and dreary” were stricken dumb by the storm—at the most, they whimpered in safety with none to heed them: the braver spirits were shocked into poetry and like the larks are heard between the roaring of the guns—the articulate voices of millions of fighting men, giving to poetry a new value and significance.

For many months this new verse—vivid, definite, concentrated, and not a mechanical echo any more than a striving after new or bizarre effects—has

Preface

flowed in from all parts of our far-flung battle-line. Scores of slim volumes and hundreds of separate poems have come from men in the Army—from France and Flanders, Gallipoli and the Soudan, Egypt and East Africa. The published volumes have not been laid under contribution, but some of the poems collected here have appeared in *The Poetry Review*, in which a greatly appreciated feature has been made of contributions by soldiers, while we are indebted to *The New Witness* for permission to include typical poems by Lieutenant Geoffrey Howard and the late Lieutenant W. N. Hodgson,¹ m.c., who left Oxford to join the Army and found a grave in France in July last. About the same time Lieutenant Victor Ratcliffe¹ was killed in action near Fricourt, and as this volume is going through the press we hear that Sergeant Streets,¹ who was a miner before he enlisted in August, 1914, and Corporal Robertson have been “missing” since July 1. This is their priceless legacy. No further introduction or commentary is needed.

GALLOWAY KYLE.

“THE POETRY REVIEW” OFFICE,
September, 1916.

¹ Memorial volumes are in preparation for early publication.

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H. D'A. B.
MAJOR, 55TH DIVISION (B.E.F., FRANCE)

Marthe

MARTHE of the lowered eyes ;
Eyes beautiful that seem to dim
Like violets at the water's rim,
Marthe of the lowered eyes.

Marthe of the pale, pale face ;
That shows the anxious soul's suspense,
And sorrow veiled by reticence,
Marthe of the pale, pale face.

Marthe of the heart of gold ;
Where hid as in a cloister-cell
Abides her love for him who fell,
Marthe of the heart of gold.

The March

LIKE lances of a phantom-troop
The rain sweeps by in level lines
Where stunted pollard-willows droop
And slag-heaps lift o'er gutted mines.

Soldier Poets

A sky morose, tempestuous, black,
The low horizon misty-wan,
And silent o'er the long, long track
A khaki column trudging on.

Past gaping roofs and tumbled stalls,
Past dismal yards and hovels damp,
Where eyeless windows mock the walls,
They march with hollow-thudding tramp.

Givenchy Field

THE dead lie on Givenchy field
As lie the sodden Autumn leaves,
The dead lie on Givenchy field,
The trailing mist a cerement weaves.

Abandoned, save for murder's work,
A mine-shaft bulks against the stars,
And fast receding in the mirk
The trenches show like umber scars.

"All's quiet," the sentry's message runs,
Outwearied men to slumber yield;
The rain drips down the hooded guns,
All's quiet upon Givenchy field.

H. D'A. B.

No-Man's-Land

THERE'S a zone
Wild and lone

None claim, none own,

That goes by the name of No-Man's-Land ;
Its frontiers are bastioned, and wired, and mined,
The rank grass shudders and shakes in the wind,
And never a roof nor a tree you find
In No-Man's-Land.

Sprung from hell
Monsters fell
Invisible

Await who venture through No-Man's-Land,
Like a stab in the dark is the death they deal
From an eye of fire in a skull of steel
When the echoes wake to their thunder-peal
In No-Man's-Land.

They that gave
Lives so brave
Have found a grave.

In the haggard fields of No-Man's-Land,
By the foeman's reddened parapet,
They lie with never a head-stone set,
But their dauntless souls march forward yet
In No-Man's-Land.

Soldier Poets

The Counter-attack

A WAXEN moon hung high in night's black
tent,

A ghost-wind in the branches stirring,
And from the ridges tunnelled, scarred and rent,
A deep and sullen boom recurring.

Flash follows flash. A lurid fan-like glare
The ebon vault an instant blenches,
While green and crimson rocket-signals flare
In No-Man's-Land between the trenches.

Shells shriek, bombs crash and thunder, bullets
whine,
Tornado hideous, evil-boding,
That rolls in vain against our serried line,
Alert for onslaught, calmly loading.

Now up and at them. Shouts exultant, harsh,
A mêlée of cold steel colliding,
Gaunt shadows grappling in a bloody marsh,
And low moans rising and subsiding.

JOSEPH COURTNEY

LIEUT., R.A.M.C.

“As the Leaves Fall”

Autumn, 1916

AND the leaves fall . . .
The silver and the golden fall together,
A-mingled irresistibly like tears.

The low-branched elms stand idly
In all the full-leaved glory of their life :
Yet here and there a yellow flake slips slowly,
And the branch, where once it hung, lies bare.
Below they lie—the golden fruits of day.
And a soft spirit of the night
Weaves the white spell of sleep about their feet.

And the leaves fall . . .
The great sleep of the trees is nigh :
The flowers are dead.
Yet through the fine-spun web of mist
Gleams faintly Michael's pale blue star. . . .
A time of sad soul-hunger, unspeakable desire,
That clutches at the heart and drags the soul !

Soldier Poets

And the leaves fall. . . .
Is there a far faint life
Whispers with blood-choked voice thy name?
Whispers but once—no more?
Then weep ye now, O Mothers!
And, Maidens, weep!
O England, rend the raiment of thy wealth:
Tear the soft vesture of thy pride!
Let the tears fall and be not comforted!
In all their youth they went for thee;
In all their strength they died for thee;
And so they fell,
As the leaves fall. . . .

Yet they say you are dead?
Ask of the trees. Perchance *they* hear
A distant murmuring of pulsing sap.
Perchance in their dim minds they see
Pale curlèd leaves that strive to greet the sun.
Perchance they know of yellow daffodils
Will dance again.

Yet the leaves fall . . .
And yonder through the mist is Michael's star—
Saint Michael with his angel-host!
Ay! see them as they sweep along

Joseph Courtney

Borne on an unseen wind to the far throne of God.
And, Mothers, see ; O Maidens, look
How the world's Christ stoops down and kisses each.
And listen now and hear their cry,
As, lances raised, they greet their King—
“ There is no death . . . There is no death . . .
No death . . . ” and comfort you,
When the leaves fall.

S. DONALD COX

RIFLEMAN, 2/5 C.L.R., LONDON RIFLE BRIGADE

To My Mother—1916

IF I should fall, grieve not that one so weak
And poor as I
Should die.

Nay! though thy heart should break
Think only this: that when at dusk they speak
Of sons and brothers of another one,
Then thou canst say—"I too had a son;
He died for England's sake!"

The Song of The Happy Warrior

THE song of the boy who was brave and fair,
He was young and his eyes were grey,
He was swift to run and strong to strive
And ready for any play.
He climbed to the top of the apple tree
When nobody else would dare;
He couldn't get down and he feared he'd fall
As the branch swayed in the air.

S. Donald Cox

O ! the ground seemed such a way below,
But he smiled a doubtful smile-a,
And he grit his teeth and sang "Cheer-o !"
Though the drop to the ground seemed a
mile-a.

The song of the man in the khaki-coat
As he stands in the wet and snow,
A smoking rifle in his hands
And his feet in the mud below.
The tale of the charge and the man that fell,
Of the tunic dyed with red,
The tight-clenched teeth and the clammy brow
And the stain where the wound had bled.
O ! he groaned as he jolted to and fro
And wan, wan was his smile-a,
But he grit his teeth and he hummed
"Cheer-o !"
And he died at the end of a mile-a.

E. J. L. GARSTIN
LIEUT., 12TH BATTALION, MIDDLESEX REGIMENT
(B.E.F.)

To the Rats

O LOATHSOME rodent with your endless
squeaking,
You hurry to and fro and give no peace,
Above the noise of Hun projectiles' shrieking
The sound of scratching footfalls never cease.

There is a thing which I could never pen,
The horror with which I regard your race,
For how can I describe my feelings when
I wake and find you sitting on my face.

Oh, how shall I portray the depths I plumb
When, stretched upon this bed, my body numb,
I see you, agile, helter-skelter fly.

Oh, Ignominy ! while I sleepless lie,
You play your foolish games with eager zest
And sport and gambol freely on my chest.

E. J. L. Garstin

Lines written between 1 and 2.30 a.m.
in a German dug-out

OH horrible ! How can the pen describe
The ghastliness of that which meets the eye,
The devastation and the frightfulness ?
It seems as if some superhuman force,
Vast and malevolent, had passed this way,
Tormented by the Furies till its hate
Became insensate and demoniac :
Then, prompted by its innate cruelty,
Had ravaged where it went and had destroyed
All that it met, and made the countryside
A scene of horror without parallel.
Vast craters pit the ground, no blade of grass
Is left to shew what was a fertile plain ;
Now is all barren, rugged, hideous,
The nightmare landscape of a fevered brain.
And scattered over all the stricken field,
See lie the shattered bodies of the slain
In all the ghastly posturings of death,
Their attitudes suggesting all their pain ;
While over all, despite the blazing sun,
There hangs the shadow of a lurking death,
And in the cannon's never-ceasing roar
One hears the knell of many friends and foes :
But yet, for ever boastful of our worth,

Soldier Poets

We vaunt ourselves and puff our chests with pride,
Saying that man was ne'er so civilized,
No age so cultured. How the gods must smile
At such a paradox, at such a lie !
With frightful ingenuity, perhaps,
We have amassed a quantity of means
Whereby to sow destruction and to kill
Each other ; yet the thought cannot be crushed
That, to be civilized means something more.
It is so trivial, for here are we,
Who are but particles upon a world,
Itself a minute atom lost in space,
At war with one another, filled with hate
And lust to kill and primal savag'ry.
What is the use, when all is said and done,
If we have hurried to eternity
The souls of many million fellow-men ?
Our lives are but a moment in all time,
A fleeting instant, quickly come and gone ;
Why fret ourselves in order to curtail
The short existences of other men ?
And yet, in order to achieve this end
We suffer untold hardships, spend our wealth,
Endure the indescribable, and strain
Our ev'ry sinew, muscle, energy,
And name us patriots !

JULIAN GRENFELL, D.S.O.
CAPTAIN, ROYAL DRAGOONS (B.E.F.)

Into Battle

THE naked earth is warm with Spring,
And with green grass and bursting trees
Leans to the sun's gaze glorying,
And quivers in the sunny breeze ;
And Life is Colour and Warmth and Light,
And a striving evermore for these ;
And he is dead who will not fight ;
And who dies fighting has increase.

The fighting man shall from the sun
Take warmth, and life from the glowing earth ;
Speed with the light-foot winds to run,
And with the trees to newer birth ;
And find, when fighting shall be done,
Great rest, and fullness after dearth.

All the bright company of Heaven
Hold him in their high comradeship,
The Dog-Star, and the Sisters Seven,
Orion's Belt and sworded hip.

Soldier Poets

The woodland trees that stand together,
They stand to him each one a friend ;
They gently speak in the windy weather ;
They guide to valley and ridge's end.

The kestrel hovering by day,
And the little owls that call by night,
Bid him be swift and keen as they,
As keen of ear, as swift of sight.

The blackbird sings to him, " Brother, brother,
If this be the last song you shall sing
Sing well, for you may not sing another ;
Brother, sing."

In dreary, doubtful, waiting hours,
Before the brazen frenzy starts,
The horses show him nobler powers ;
O patient eyes, courageous hearts !

And when the burning moment breaks,
And all things else are out of mind,
And only Joy of Battle takes
Him by the throat, and makes him blind,

Julian Grenfell, D.S.O.

Through joy and blindness he shall know,
Not caring much to know, that still
Nor lead nor steel shall reach him, so
That it be not the Destined Will.

The thundering line of battle stands,
And in the air Death moans and sings ;
But Day shall clasp him with strong hands,
And Night shall fold him in soft wings.

FLANDERS, *April*, 1915.

To a Black Greyhound

SHINING black in the shining light,
Inky black in the golden sun,
Graceful as the swallow's flight,
Light as swallow, winged one,
Swift as driven hurricane—
Double-sinewed stretch and spring,
Muffled thud of flying feet,
See the black dog galloping,
Hear his wild foot-beat.

See him lie when the day is dead,
Black curves curled on the boarded floor.
Sleepy eyes, my sleepy head—
Eyes that were aflame before.

Soldier Poets

Gentle now, they burn no more ;
Gentle now and softly warm,
With the fire that made them bright
Hidden—as when after storm
Softly falls the night.

God of Speed, who makes the fire—
God of Peace, who lulls the same—
God who gives the fierce desire,
Lust for blood as fierce as flame—
God who stands in Pity's name—
Many may ye be or less,
Ye who rule the earth and sun ;
Gods of strength and gentleness,
Ye are ever one.

The Hills

MUSSOORIE and Chakrata Hill
The Jumna flows between ;
And from Chakrata's hills afar
Mussoorie's vale is seen.
The mountains sing together
In cloud or sunny weather,
The Jumna, through their tether
Foams white, or plunges green.

Julian Grenfell, D.S.O.

The mountains stand and laugh at Time ;
They pillar up the Earth,
They watch the ages pass, they bring
New centuries to birth.
They feel the daybreak shiver,
They see Time passing ever
As flows the Jumna river,
As breaks the white sea-surf.

They drink the sun in a golden cup,
And in blue mist the rain ;
With a sudden brightening they meet the lightning
Or ere it strikes the plain.
They seize the sullen thunder,
And take it up for plunder,
And cast it down and under,
And up and back again.

They are as changeless as the rock,
As changeful as the sea ;
They rest, but as a lover rests
After love's ecstasy.
They watch, as a true lover
Watches the quick lights hover
About the lids that cover
His eyes so wearily.

Soldier Poets

Heaven lies upon their breasts at night,
Heaven kisses them at dawn ;
Heaven clasps and kisses them at even
With fire of the sun's death born.
They turn to his desire
Their bosom, flushing higher
With soft receptive fire,
And blushing, passion-torn.

Here, in the hills of ages
I met thee face to face ;
O mother Earth, O lover Earth,
Look down on me with grace.
Give me thy passion burning,
And thy strong patience, turning
And wrath to power, all yearning
To truth, thy dwelling-place.

Hymn to the Fighting Boar

GOD gave the horse for man to ride,
And steel wherewith to fight,
And wine to swell his soul with pride,
And women for delight :
But a better gift than these all four
Was when He made the fighting boar.

Julian Grenfell, D.S.O.

The horse is filled with spirit rare,
His heart is bold and free ;
The bright steel flashes in the air,
And glitters hungrily.
But these were little use before
The Lord He made the fighting boar.

The ruby wine doth banish care,
But it confounds the head ;
The fickle fair is light as air,
And makes the heart bleed red ;
But wine nor love can tempt us more
When we may hunt the fighting boar.

When Noah's big monsoon was laid,
The land began to ride again,
And then the first hog-spear was made
By the hands of Tubal Cain ;
The sons of Shem and many more
Came out to ride the fighting boar.

Those ancient Jew boys went like stinks,
They knew not reck nor fear,
Old Noah knocked the first two jinks,
And Nimrod got the spear.
And ever since those times of yore
True men do ride the fighting boar.

Soldier Poets

Drink then to women and to wine,
Though heart and head they steal—
But here's to steed and spear and swine
A brimming glass, no heel,
And humble thanks to God Who saw
His way to make the fighting boar.

To the Mussourie Race Club

TO win a race, you need a horse
With speed, and power to stay the course.
The horse that beats the other skins
And finishes the winner, wins—
Not so, Sir, at Mussourie.

I had the devil of a horse ;
I won ; but failed to scale, of course,
Because the judges, for my sins,
Had backed the second horse (which wins,
When backed by all Mussourie).

A horse that swings athwart the course,
A horse that bumps another horse,
Is reprimanded for his sins ;
And he that finished second, wins—
Not so, Sir, at Mussourie.

Julian Grenfell, D.S.O.

Again I ran my speedy horse ;—
A native jockey comes across,
And knocks me clean from off my pins,
And smiles, and gallops on and wins
The "Mountain Plate" Mussourie.

We all objected—but, of course,
When judges back the winning horse
The horse that finished winner, wins—
And that is when the fun begins
In racing at Mussourie.

[We are indebted to Lord Desborough for the use of these hitherto unprinted poems by his son, Captain Julian Grenfell, D.S.O., whose "Into Battle" (published in *The Times* on May 28th, 1915—the day his death from wounds was recorded—and afterwards included in Robert Bridges' Anthology, "The Spirit of Man," and in "A Crown of Amaranth") has been described as "the one incorruptible and incomparable poem which the war has yet given us in any language." The above poems were sent home while on service in India, where he killed thirty-six boars in one season. Both achievements are characteristic of the fine courageous spirit and all-round activities of the young Dragoon who "knocked out the champion boxer of South Africa in the intervals of writing poetry."]

WILFRID J. HALLIDAY
PRIVATE, 13TH BATTALION, WEST YORKS. REGIMENT

The Grave

THEY dug his grave by lantern light,
A nameless German boy :
A remnant from that hurried flight,
Lost, wounded, left in hapless plight
For carrion to destroy.
They thought him dead at first until
They felt the heart's slow beat :
So calm he lay, serene and still,
It seemed a butchery to kill
An innocence so sweet.

A movement of his lips, maybe
To call his mother there :
A tear, a smile of victory—
Then easeful death proclaimed him free,
Free from a tyrant's care.

Somewhere a mother droops and sighs
For tidings long delayed :
Somewhere a sister mourns and cries
For him who in that cold grave lies,
Dug by the foeman's spade.

Wilfrid J. Halliday

The Awakening

O I have watched God's fairest things
And heard sweet nature's melody ;
Have felt the thrill that Pity brings
And sailed in tears its weed-strewn sea.
As blithe as any summer's day
I leapt for joy to suck the sweet
Of sunshine, dingle, meadow'd hay,
And all the treasures at my feet.

But now tho' banished far from these,
In grosser places turned and tossed,
I feel a purer, nobler ease,
New heather ways have now been crossed.
A something steals upon my breast
Whene'er I watch night's jewels shine :
It whispers " He has seen the test,
And thou wast faithful — Joy be thine ! "

O Pride of Pride ! how couldst thou see
That inner ray when half thy gaze
Was fixed on self, not pure and free,
But dimly peering through a haze ?
And then I threw the bonds aside,
For thee, My Country, call'd to fight.
Forlorn, forgotten, self-defied,
I know that I have seen the light.

Soldier Poets

The Red Cross

'MID the might of battle's roar
And the groans of maimed and dying;
'Mid the welter and the gore
And the hiss of bullets flying,
Like an angel, calm and brave
Goes the Red Cross Knight to save.

'Mid the deadly shrapnel hail
And the sniper's sullen firing ;
'Mid the carnage and the wail
Of the stricken and expiring,
Like a mother, calm and brave
Goes the Red Cross Knight to save.

'Mid the sleet and driving rain
And the biting, stinging frost ;
'Mid the mangled and the slain
And the terrors of the lost,
Like a hero, calm and brave
Goes the Red Cross Knight to save.

What of him do writers tell ?
What reward for sacrifice ?
Nought but " Truly ye did well,"
And in that his guerdon lies.
But the wounded, knowing, crave
For your love. Go forth to save.

Wilfrid J. Halliday

The Gleam

I SEE, I feel, I sometimes know
And penetrate the soul of things.
I've sipped of streams that sometimes flow
From mystic, unimagined things.

For one brief moment have I strayed
In pastures clothed in sparkling dew,
And fed on fruits the gods have laid
Of wondrous taste and goodly hue.

Heaven judge my soul by that brief bliss
And pity me that I am lost
So oft in clay, and seem to miss
The path that beckoning gleam has crossed.

To-day

NO longer art, but artifice,
No unrefracted ray :
No streamings from the infinite,
No rough, inspired way :
No motive selfless, free from taint,
But " will it pay ? "

Soldier Poets

The charlatan ascends the rock
Where prophets stood of yore ;
The shallow cynic dons the garb
That Trust and Honour wore,
And viperous scorn stands sentinel
Beside Truth's half-shut door.

Say, Spirit, what this England needs.
Is it a common foe ?
Must we through tears be led to smiles,
To happiness through woe ?
Shall blood of slaughtered sons buy grace ?
Then, England, let it flow.

G. ROUNTREE HARVEY

2/A.M., ROYAL FLYING CORPS

The Maid of France

JOAN heard a Voice above the whispering trees :
“ Arise, scatter mine enemies ! ”

She took a banner, but no sword—
Veterans hung on her lightest word ;
And, ah, the splendour of the fight,
Proud victory where right was might ! . . .

Alas ! that ruling frailty could
So mar and betray such glorihood. . . .

Prisoned, fettered to an iron ring,
Her spirit knew no prisoning !

They burned her body at a stake of shame—
As who would quench a flame with flame !
But out of the pyre men watched upsoar
Her grail-like soul, that evermore
Gleams above the lily meads—
And men still follow where she leads. . . .

Soldier Poets

Across her fields this later day
A blacker tyrant hacks his way ;
The sons of France are forth to wage
The war that darkens every age—
Might against Right—and once again
God-sent maid leads fighting men.

This day they name her—LIBERTY . . .
God grant she'll win the victory !

Mother of Sons

YOUR hands are tired with their long day's
labour,
Toil-worn hands that have worked with a will ;
Must they know no rest till they lie forever
In the last firm clasp, so white and still ?

Your dark-rimmed eyes are dim with weeping,
Their heavy lids are fain to close—
Must they know more sorrow ere the last mist rising
Heralds the hour of the long repose ? . . .

Twilight is filling the valley hollows,
The dew is falling, the wind grows cold—
But look, on the height, the rose of promise
With crimson petals and heart of gold !

GEOFFREY HOWARD

LIEUT., ROYAL FUSILIERS

The Beach Road by the Wood

I KNOW a beach road,
A road where I would go,
It runs up northward
From Cooden Bay to Hoe ;
And there, in the High Woods,
Daffodils grow.

And whoever walks along there
Stops short and sees,
By the moist tree-roots
In a clearing of the trees,
Yellow great battalions of them,
Blowing in the breeze.

While the spring sun brightens,
And the dull sky clears,
They blow their golden trumpets,
Those golden trumpeteers !
They blow their golden trumpets
And they shake their glancing spears.

Soldier Poets

And all the rocking beech-trees
Are bright with buds again,
And the green and open spaces
Are greener after rain,
And far to southward one can hear
The sullen, moaning rain.

Once before I die
I will leave the townd behind,
The loud town, the dark town
That cramps and chills the mind,
And I'll stand again bareheaded there
In the sunlight and the wind.

Yes, I shall stand
Where as a boy I stood
Above the dykes and levels
In the beach road by the wood,
And I'll smell again the sea breeze,
Salt and harsh and good.

And there shall rise to me
From that consecrated ground
The old dreams, the lost dreams
That years and cares have drowned :
Welling up within me
And above me and around
The song that I could never sing
And the face I never found.

“Without Shedding of Blood . . .”

GOD gave us England from of old,
But we held light the gift He gave ;
Our royal birthright we have sold,
And now the land we lost for gold
Only our blood can save.

*Not till thousands have been slain
Shall the green wood be green again ;
Not till men shall fall and bleed
Can brown ale taste like ale indeed.
Blood and blood must yet be shed
To make the roses red.*

For minds made vile, and blind with greed,
For sins that spread from sire to son ;
For loss of honour, loss of creed,
There yet remains one cure indeed—
And there remains but one.

*Malvern men must die and kill
That wind may blow on Malvern Hill ;
Devonshire blood must fall like dew
That Devon's bays may yet be blue ;
London must spill out lives like wine
That London's lights may shine.*

Soldier Poets

Lord, for the years of ease and vice,
For hearts unmanned and souls decayed,
Thou hast required a sacrifice—
A bitter and a bloody price—
And lo ! the price is paid.

*We have given all things that were ours,
So that our weeds might yet be flowers ;
We have covered half the earth with gore
That our houses might be homes once more ;
The sword Thou hast demanded, Lord :
And, now, behold the sword !*

England

HER seed is sown about the world. The seas
For Her have path'd their waters. She is
known

In swamps that steam about the burning zone,
And dreaded in the last white lands that freeze.
For Her the glory that was Nineveh's
Is nought : the pomp of Tyre and Babylon
Nought : and for all the realms that Cæsar won—
One tithe of hers were more than all of these.

Geoffrey Howard

And she is very small and very green
And full of little lanes all dense with flowers
That wind along and lose themselves between
Mossed farms, and parks, and fields of quiet sheep.
And in the hamlets, where her stalwarts sleep,
Low bells chime out from old elm-hidden towers.

•

MALCOLM HEMPHREY

LANCE-CORPORAL, A.O.C. (B.E.F., NAIROBI, BRITISH
EAST AFRICA)

Hills of Home

O H ! you hills are filled with sunlight, and the
green leaves paled to gold,
And the smoking mists of Autumn hanging faintly
o'er the wold ;
I dream of hills of other days whose sides I loved to
roam
When Spring was dancing through the lanes of
those distant hills of home.

The winds of heaven gathered there as pure and
cold as dew ;
Wood-sorrel and wild violets along the hedgerows
grew,
The blossom on the pear-trees was as white as flakes
of foam
In the orchard 'neath the shadow of those distant
hills of home.

Malcolm Hemphrey

The first white frost in the meadow will be shining
there to-day,
And the furrowed upland glinting warm beside the
woodland way ;
There, a bright face and a clear hearth will be
waiting when I come,
And my heart is throbbing wildly for those distant
hills of home

DYNELEY HUSSEY

LIEUT., 13TH BATTALION, LANCASHIRE FUSILIERS

Youth

O LITTLE flower,
That yet dost not disclose
The secrets which thy closed bud scarce knows,
I blow upon thy petals that thine hour
Be hastened, the awakening to thy power.

Short is the time,
O flower, and full of storms ;
The summer sky is dark with warlike forms
Of battling rains, and thunder-clouds that climb
Laden with danger up the blue sublime.

The night-born dew
Shall, on thy lip, be wine ;
The worship of the wide stars shall be thine ;
And the vast, mottled Heaven to thy view
Shall spread its cloak of cloud and changeless blue ;

And thou shalt hear
Of birds sweet poetry,
And deep-droned wisdom from the noonday bee ;
And gaudy butterflies shall flutter near
To whisper gallant secrets in thine ear.

Dyneley Hussey

Therefore awake,
Throw out thy white arms wide
To clasp unto thyself in joyous pride
The sun's warm husbandry, and gladly take
Thy full of life, before the dark storms break.

Security

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills."

THE smooth and rounded rhythm of the hills ;
The rugged rhyme of mountains ; the strong
flow
Of the epic river, sweeping where it wills ;
The brook's light lyric straying to and fro ;
All the clean scents of flower and farm and earth
Wet with the downpour of straight summer rain ;
Day's flaming death, cool Dawn's more tender birth,
And Noon's unchanging blue ; and in the lane
Tall foxgloves, roses, and the singing birds ;
The whispered music of the riverside ;
The pleasant milky smell of evening herds ;
And, over all, the jade hills windy, wide :
These will I seek, that they may shed on me
The peacefulness of their security.

Soldier Poets

Courage

ALONE amid the battle-din untouched
Stands out one figure beautiful, serene ;
No grime of smoke nor reeking blood hath smutched
The virgin brow of this unconquered queen.
She is the Joy of Courage vanquishing
The unstilled tremors of the fearful heart ;
And it is she that bids the poet sing,
And gives to each the strength to bear his part.

Her eye shall not be dimmed, but as a flame
Shall light the distant ages with its fire,
That men may know the glory of her name,
That purified our souls of fear's desire.
And she doth calm our sorrow, soothe our pain,
And she shall lead us back to peace again.

The Dead

AS, when the viols of autumn deeply sob,
And from the trees are reft the withered leaves
Ensanguined with the life-blood of the year,
That they with outstretched, barren arms bewail,
The gardener brushes up the leaves ;
So, when from England's tree of life are reft

Dyneley Hussey

Dust-hued and bloody your autumnal lives
That shrivel blasted by the breath of War,
And the bereavéd tree sad music weaves,
 The Gardener gathers up your lives.

Those dead leaves waken in the weary earth,
 Making the barren warm and rich with life,
And give to nobler flowers a glorious birth ;
And your dead lives are dead alone in name,
 For you shall live anew after the strife,
And light in future hearts a sacred flame.

Joy

JOY has been ours a little, Joy divine ;
Joy filling all things, mastering our hearts ;
Joy as intoxication of red wine ;
 Joy leaping o'er the breach when Love departs.
Ah ! we were wild with this glad ecstasy,
 And danced, and danced delirious in dreams,
Through the dim-gleaming Gate of Ivory,
 Out of the World that Is to that which Seems.
And we did laugh in this great Joy of ours,
 And all the world re-echoed to our cry.
And Time was nothing ; days were short-lived hours,
 And we Immortal as the days went by.
 For Joy, O Love, had made my heart a feather :
 O I am glad we've known this Joy together !

Soldier Poets

Mirage

A POET once in dreaming fashioned
A woman to his fancy : Thus, he said,
Shall I find freedom from the tyranny
Of earth and dreary actuality.

The golden beams that radiate the skies
Between the clouds he caught, and spun her hair ;
Of marble whiteness made her forehead wise,
And wrought her brows soft as the summer air ;
For eyes he took two violets dim with dew
That veiled their glory ; from a new-blown rose
Two velvet petals for her cheeks, and two
Red corals sought in distant seas he chose
To be the lips he longed for, and between
He set the wood-grown windflower's pearly tears;
Then from a shell he cut the inner sheen
And polished it and shaped it for her ears
To listen to the sea-throb of his sighs ;
And in her glance he deftly wove fine strands
Of filmy starshine robbed from summer skies ;
A lily's pointed petals were her hands
Tipped each with moonstones ; last he made her
heart,
Of snowflakes fashioned and forget-me-not,
And steeped it in red wine to bear its part :
Thus wrought his fancy—but he found her not.

E. HARDRESS LLOYD

LIEUT., LONDON IRISH RIFLES

FULL of the tumult of its triumph,
Its vaulted silences a frenzied shriek
Of mirthless laughter,
Is my Soul.

Like some strong swimmer from the deep,
Dripping water,
Is my Spirit,
From its bath of Earthly Love emerging.

Like a lone musician with his harp strings broken,
Viewing the void to which his melody has fled,
Like some weary Poet struggling with expression,
So is my withered heart, my burning head.

JOHN LODGE
LIEUT., 8TH BATTALION, BEDFORDSHIRE
REGIMENT (B.E.F.)

God and the Child

THE blessing of all blessings did attend
The marriage of my friend,
And gave him, to his comfort and his joy,
A baby boy ;
To whom, as day by day
The growing mind took strength and spread its
wings
In search of many things,
The father would display
Nothing that was not true and pure and fair,
Withholding whatsoe'er,
Being born of ugliness and pain,
Turns to its own again.
So for the child was every season bright
And made for his delight ;
No fear he knew of anger and the rod,
But, led by love and gentleness and care,
Found gifts of goodness everywhere
And babbled of the giver, even God.

John Lodge

And so it came to pass
That, having lately come to his fifth year,
One evening he was playing on the grass,
Bestriding his toy engine, not less dear
For being old and quaint,
Batter'd and wooden and devoid of paint ;
And by it stood a Chinaman of tin,
His wagging head now still,
Perchance because the trumpet at his side
Awhile had ceas'd to fill
His ears with din ;
And happy in his playthings was the child.
But suddenly his brown eyes open'd wide
And he no longer smil'd
But in a pensive posture held his head,
As tho' the fastness of his young content
Had been assail'd by doubt and wonderment
And threaten'd were his joys :
Until at last he slowly spake and said—
“ Daddy, has God got any toys ? ”

On Zeppelin Picquet :

Christmas Eve, 1915

CHRISTMAS EVE—and we stared at the sky
Where the clouds and the stars went galloping by,
And strict was the watch we kept for the flight
Of the death-dealing terror that flieth by night.

Soldier Poets

Christmas Eve—and we watch'd till the morn
Should rise and repeat how a Babe was born ;
And our hearts within us were sad as we scann'd
The stars that spake not of Peace for our land.

Christmas Eve—and oh, to espy,
Like Bethlehem's shepherds, the hosts of the sky,
Their voices blent in rapturous mirth—
“ Glory to God and Peace upon Earth ! ”

Christmas Eve—but set was the star
That guided the kings from regions afar—
Oh, soon may it rise and lead us again
Where One doth in peace and equity reign.

To Our Child Unborn

NO offspring art thou of a dreamer's rhyme ;
But when my thought and hers, immaculate,
Conceiv'd thee thou didst leap, full-grown, elate,
Over the high-embattled walls of Time,
To watch our ways from some invisible clime,
Where, holding yet celestial estate,
In quietude thou dost the call await
To disarray thee of thy gear sublime.

John Lodge

Then hither shalt thou wing thy lonely flight
And put upon thee robes of mortal mesh
Laid up against the season of thy birth—
And oh, I pray that undefil'd and bright
The warp and woof may be of that fair flesh
Wherewith endued thou shalt appear on earth.

“EDWARD MELBOURNE”

(W. N. HODGSON, M.C.)

LIEUT., DEVON REGIMENT

Killed in the Somme Advance, July, 1916

Durham

ABOVE the storied city, ringed about
With shining waters, stands God's ancient house
Over the windy uplands gazing out
Towards the sea ; and deep about it drowse
The grey dreams of the buried centuries,
And thro' all time across the rustling weirs
The ancient river passes,—thus it lies
Exceeding wise and strong and full of years.

Often within those dreaming isles we heard,
Breaking the level flow of sombre chords,
A trumpet-call of melody that stirred
The blood and pierced the *heart* like flaming swords.
Long years we learned and grew, and in this place
Put on the harness of our manhood's state,
And then with fearless heart and forward face
Went strongly forth to try a fall with fate :
And so we passed, and others had our place.
But well we know that here till days shall cease,
While the great stream goes seaward and trees bloom,
God's kindness dwells about these courts of peace.

“Edward Melbourne”

Before Action

BY all the glories of the day,
And the cool evening's benison :
By the last sunset touch that lay
Upon the hills when day was done :
By beauty lavishly outpoured,
And blessings carelessly received,
By all the days that I have lived,
Make me a soldier, Lord.

By all of all men's hopes and fears
And all the wonders poets sing,
The laughter of unclouded years,
And every sad and lovely thing :
By the romantic ages stored
With high endeavour that was his,
By all his mad catastrophes,
Make me a man, O Lord.

I, that on my familiar hill
Saw with uncomprehending eyes
A hundred of Thy sunsets spill
Their fresh and sanguine sacrifice,
Ere the sun swings his noonday sword
Must say good-bye to all of this :—
By all delights that I shall miss,
Help me to die, O Lord.

Soldier Poets

Back to Rest

(Composed on the way back to the Rest Camp after
severe fighting at Loos.)

A LEAPING wind from England,
The skies without a stain,
Clear cut against the morning
Slim poplars after rain,
The foolish noise of sparrows
And starlings in a wood—
After the grime of battle
We know that these are good.

Death whining down from Heaven,
Death roaring from the ground,
Death stinking in the nostril,
Death shrill in every sound :
Doubting we charged and conquered—
Hopeless we struck and stood,
Now when the fight is ended
We know that it was good.

We that have seen the strongest
Cry like a beaten child,
The sanest eyes unholy,
The cleanest hands defiled ;
We that have known the heart blood
Less than the lees of wine,
We that have seen men broken,
We know man is divine.

GEORGE C. MICHAEL

LANCE-CORPORAL, R.E.

An April Song *

ORCHARD land ! Orchard land !
Damson blossom, primrose bloom
Avon, like a silver band

Winds from Stratford down to Broome :
All the orchards shimmer white
For an April day's delight :
We have risen in our might,
Left this land we love, to fight,
Fighting still, that these may stand,
Orchard land ! Orchard land !

Running stream ! Running stream !
Ruddy tench and silver perch :
Shakespeare loved the water's gleam
Sparkling on by Welford church :
Water fay meets woodland gnome
Where the silver eddies foam
Thro' the richly scented loam :
We are fain to see our home,
See again thy silver gleam,
Running stream ! Running stream !

* Written on leave at Stratford-on-Avon.

Soldier Poets

Silver throats ! Silver throats !

Piping blackbird, trilling thrush :

Shakespeare heard your merry notes ;

Still you herald morning's blush :

You shall sing your anthems grand

When we've finished what He planned,

God will hear and understand,

God will give us back our land

Where the water-lily floats,

Silver throats ! Silver throats !

THE HON. EVAN MORGAN

2ND LIEUT., WELSH GUARDS

What of the Dead?

IF in the repose of an arbour
Under a western sky
One dreams of a vast eternal
And one questions the reason why ;
Why joy should dissolve into sorrow,
Why pearls should melt in the wine,
And whether the new dawning morrow
Will reckon the close of our time ?
If in the repose of the arbour
One gazes on nature around,
Is there some definite answer
In the earth or the sky to be found ?
Are we the pawns of a Jevah
That move on a cross-chequered board ?
Propelled from the back by a lever,
Controlled, supervised by a Lord ?
Given a pen as a plaything
To scribble out poems and plays—
Works that we worship with reverence,
The blossoms of earlier days—
Given a spirit of reason,
Given a mind to attend,

Soldier Poets

Given a soul filled with treason
To embitter and poison the end?
Is there a peaceful Nirvana?
Is there a rest for the soul?
A bed for the toil-driven Karma,
A telos? a Heaven? a goal?
What of the slain in the battle?
What of the dead on the field?
Foul slaughtered like horses and cattle,
Those men that we use as a shield:
If ever a soul got to Heaven!
If ever soul reaped a reward!
Those whose red blood has been given
A gift to their own native sword:
Those are the ones for a Heaven,
For a peace and a pleasure unknown,
By their work are they all self-forgiven,
Let their blood for His Blood atone.

The World's Reward

To N. S., 1st Coldstream Guards

UNDER what melancholy thought
 Laboured we long!
Setting all joy at nought,
 We joined the throng
Of striving wretches, battered by despair,
With bursting eye-balls, blood-bespattered hair.

The Hon. Evan Morgan

Onward we trudge, a hostile herd,
On through our night ;
God's creatures less than beast or bird ;
A bloody sight.
Slaves to our own decree, burnt through of fires,
Doubting our Maker's love, or His desires.

Thus through unending pain
We go to death,
Hoping by Death to gain
A happier breath ;
Trusting for once, whatever we had doubted,
That Death himself to us, of victory now shouted.

Fed with the failing of our life,
Moistened with gall,
We seek for peace in battle strife,
Food for us all ;
So in our fellows' blood our hands we steep,
Trusting that good will come, when laid to sleep.

Great God, with tending hand
Watch o'er our souls,
Speeding from Mammon's land
To other goals.
And when the battlefield gives up her dead,
Let each on angel's breast lay down his head.

SYDNEY OSWALD
MAJOR, KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS

The Dead Soldier

THY dear brown eyes which were as depths
where truth

Lay bowered with frolic joy, but yesterday
Shone with the fire of thy so guileless youth,
Now ruthless death has dimmed and closed for aye.

Those sweet red lips, that never knew the stain
Of angry words or harsh, or thoughts unclean,
Have sung their last gay song. Never again
Shall I the harvest of their laughter glean.

The goodly harvest of thy laughing mouth
Is garnered in ; and lo ! the golden grain
Of all thy generous thoughts, which knew no drouth
Of meanness, and thy tender words remain

Stored in my heart ; and though I may not see
Thy peerless form nor hear thy voice again,
The memory lives of what thou wast to me.
We knew great love. . . . We have not lived in
vain.

Sydney Oswald

Dulce et Decorum est pro Patria Morí

On April 25th, 1915, three companies and the head-quarters of the 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, in effecting a landing on the Gallipoli Peninsula to the west of Cape Hellen, were met by a very deadly fire from hidden machine-guns, which caused a great number of casualties. The survivors, however, rushed up to cut the wire entanglements, notwithstanding the terrific fire from the enemy; and, after overcoming supreme difficulties, the cliffs were gained and the position maintained.

Among the many very gallant officers and men engaged in this most hazardous undertaking, Major R. R. Willis, Sergeant Richards, and Private Keneally were selected by their comrades as having performed the most signal acts of bravery and devotion to duty, and have been awarded the V.C.

THEY gave their lives for England: did not
pause

To count the glorious cost, when England bade
Her sons to strive in Freedom's holy cause,
But armed to fight. Full soon they died, yet
made

A name of lasting glory; gained applause
From all the brave; a fame which cannot fade.

We will not grieve for them, though when they fell
All joy seemed drowned in sorrow's seething tide,
No hope remained in Heaven, or Earth, or Hell,
And naught was left, save only that great pride
We feel in those brave deeds their comrades tell
Of them. Heroes amongst the brave they died.

Soldier Poets

'Neath foreign soil the soldier heroes lie
In lonely graves. No record raised above
To tell their names or deeds ; to dignify
War's resting-place, save where with hands of love
Some comrade placed a cross to testify
His dead friends' worth ; how manfully they
strove.

Glory is theirs ; the People's narrative
Of fame will tell their deeds of gallantry,
And for all time their memories will live
Shrined in our hearts. Now by our King's decree
As lasting honour, lo ! their comrades give
The cross "FOR VALOUR" to the chosen
Three.

The Attack

THE cold grey light of dawn yet hardly shows
The piles of tattered sandbags which
surround
Our narrow trench, where we beneath the ground
Wait with the longing every soldier knows
To reap the harvest which the gunner sows
Amongst the Huns. Ah ! sweet the whistling sound
Of shells o'erhead ; next silence most profound ;
Then the wild rush, the quick exchange of blows,

Sydney Oswald

The raging curses, and the strange mad lust
Of slaughter, all we know ; and how the breath
Sobs out in troublous gasps ; and with each thrust
The bayonet claims a bloody gift for death.
And in the end what guerdon shall we reap ?
To tend the wounded, for the dead to weep ?

The Aftermath

NOT yet the end of toil. The trench is won.
Though short and splendid was the
bloody fight
With steel and bomb, and though the Huns in
flight
Slunk swifter through the dark than does the sun,
We cannot rest, our work is scarce begun ;
We must make good the trench, ere morning light
The Huns will come again in greater might.
No end to toil, no rest for anyone.

Thrice lucky we, who live to fight again,
For Death was busy 'mongst the young and brave,
Yet lucky they who wait a soldier's grave,
For some blind Death has made the guests of Pain
To tend awhile. Would Death had swiftly ta'en
The fair young lives he had no mind to save !

Soldier Poets

The Battlefield

AROUND no fire the soldiers sleep to-night,
But lie a-wearied on the ice-bound field,
With cloaks wrapt round their sleeping forms, to
shield
Them from the northern winds. Ere comes the
light
Of morn brave men must arm, stern foes to fight.
The sentry stands his limbs with cold congealed ;
His head a-nod with sleep ; he cannot yield,
Though sleep and snow in deadly force unite.

Amongst the sleepers lies the Boy awake,
And wide-eyed plans brave glories that transcend
The deeds of heroes dead ; then dreams o'ertake
His tired-out brain, and lofty fancies blend
To one grand theme, and through all barriers break
To guard from hurt his faithful sleeping friend.

A. VICTOR RATCLIFFE
LIEUT., 10/13TH WEST YORKSHIRE REGIMENT

At Sundown

THE day put by his valiant shield,
And cast him down.
His broken sword lay o'er a field
Of barley brown
And his bright sceptre and his crown
Were sunken in the river's heart.

His native tent of blue and gold
Was gathered in.
I saw his torn flags o'er the wold ;
And on the whin
High silence lit, and her near kin
Fair twilight spread her firefly wings.

The birds like secret thoughts lay still
Beneath the hush
That held the sky and the long hill
And every bush.
And floated o'er the river's rush
And held the windlets in her hand.

Soldier Poets

Into the Night

INTO the night we slip once more,
Into the night to sleep.
And call upon our soothed brain
To give us to ourselves again
Beatified and lithe of limb,
To break from the sad world, and leap
Into the day beyond the rim
Of the world's darkness, and to be
From dross and sorrow free.

To rove a mountain diamonded,
And see a mother-o'-pearl
Clouding trail along the sky,
To see a silver stork go by
On stately wing, and carrying
A beautiful white lissom girl,
Soul's Innocence, whose sapphire ring
Shines with her tender sapphire eyes
Among the bluey skies.

To sail upon a silvery sea
Upon a silver ship,
And hear the siren's softest song
Come wafted the moon's path along—
Like to your breath upon my cheek

A. Victor Ratcliffe

Or a smile from lip to lip—
To love one friend with whom to speak
Of lovely, joyful things, and be
At peace with the wide sea.

Optimism

AT last there'll dawn the last of the long year,
Of the long year that seemed to dream no end,
Whose every dawn but turned the world more drear,
And slew some hope, or led away some friend.
Or be you dark, or buffeting, or blind,
We care not, day, but leave not death behind.

The hours that feed on war go heavy-hearted,
Death is no fare wherewith to make hearts fain.
Oh, we are sick to find that they who started
With glamour in their eyes come not again.
O day, be long and heavy if you will,
But on our hopes set not a bitter heel.

For tiny hopes like tiny flowers of Spring
Will come, though death and ruin hold the land,
Though storms may roar they may not break the wing
Of the earthed lark whose song is ever bland.
Fell year unpitiful, slow days of scorn,
Your kind shall die, and sweeter days be born.

ALEXANDER ROBERTSON
CORPORAL, 12TH YORK AND LANCASTERS

“We shall drink to them that sleep”
(CAMPBELL)

YES, you will do it, silently of course ;
For after many a toast and much applause,
One is in love with silence, being hoarse,
—Such more than sorrow is your quiet’s cause.

Yes, I can see you at it, in a room
Well-lit and warm, high-roofed and soft to the tread,
Sate and briefly mindful of the tomb
With its poor victim of Teutonic lead.

Some unknown notability will rise,
Ridiculously solemn, glass abrim,
And say, “To our dear brethren in the skies,”—
Dim are all eyes, all glasses still more dim.

Your pledge of sorrow but a cup to cheer,
Your sole remark some witless platitude,
Such as, “Although it does not yet appear,
To suffer is the sole beatitude.

Alexander Robertson

“ Life has, of course, good moments such as this
(A glass of sherry we should never spurn),
But where our brethren are, 'tis perfect bliss ;
Still, we are glad *our* lot was,—to return.”

Yes, I can see you and can see the dead,
Keen-eyed at last for Truth, with gentle mirth
Intent. And having heard, smiling they said :
“ Strange are our little comrades of the earth.”

A Midnight Reflection in a Hut

THIRTY “ heroes ” in a hut,
So the babblers call them, but
Sometimes doubts assail us when
We prefer to call them men.
For the “ heroes ” quarrel much,
And their language is not such,
Always, as to merit praise,—
Rather censure's frowning gaze ;
Sometimes greedy, too, they be ;
Sometimes idle, let's agree ;
Short of temper—as of breath,
The impartial witness saith ;
Sometimes cunning, that's the worst
Sin, the Serpent's, the accurst !
So the critics : they are right
In a fashion. Yet at night,

Soldier Poets

After " Lights out " and the talk
Subsequent, and when but the walk
Of the sentry tramping near
Breaks the silence and the queer
Nasal noises—" heroes " snore
Just like men other and more—
They would be of gentler mood,
Seeing them on their couches rude,
Wearied after toil, asleep,
(Are their slumbers dreamless, deep ?
Or do dark forebodings mar
Their repose who silent are ?)
The white faces, if the moon
Chanced to shine, as in a swoon
Faces are. And were they wise
They would say of each that lies,
Heedless both of praise and blame,
" Faults he has but still he came,
Duty summoning, all men cherish
Left and but, perchance, to perish."
Shamefaced they would pass them by
In the moonlight as they lie,
All on tiptoe they would flit
Doorwards, gently open it,
Glance back once and all unknown
As they entered they'd be gone.

Alexander Robertson

To an Old Lady seen at a Guest-house
for Soldiers

QUIET thou didst stand at thine appointed
place,

There was no press to purchase—younger grace
Attracts the youth of valour. Thou didst not know,
Like the old, kindly Marthas, to and fro
To haste. Yet one could say, “In thine I prize
The strength of calm that held in Mary’s eyes.”
And when they came, thy gracious smile so wrought
They knew that they were given, not that they
bought.

Thou didst not tempt to vauntings and pretence
Was dumb before thy perfect woman’s sense.
Blest who have seen, for they shall ever see
The radiance of thy benignity.

H. SMALLEY SARSON
PRIVATE, CANADIAN CONTINGENT

Raïndrops

RAINDROPS falling,
Falling on the reddened grass
Where through the night battle held full sway,
Like Tears of God that drop in pity, then pass
To wash our guilt away.

The Armed Liner

THE dull grey paint of war
Covering the shining brass and gleaming
decks
That once re-echoed to the steps of youth.
That was before
The storms of destiny made ghastly wrecks
Of Peace, the Right and Truth.
Impromptu dances, coloured lights and laughter,
Lovers watching the phosphorescent waves :
Now gaping guns, a whistling shell ; and after
So many wandering graves.

H. Smalley Sarson

The Village

1914

SETTLING behind the haze a molten sun
Clothes the distant spires in gossamer,
Touches the swinging windows of the street
With fire, splashes the trees in liquid gold
And, in lassitude of slow decline,
Heralds the twilight's ease.

 Weary workers
Turned from the plow, home-trudging from the
 fields,
Smile at their thoughts of well-earned peace and
 rest :

For in the village bustling pots and pans,
Sweet pleasant smells of peasant cookery,
Spell preparation for the evening meal.

In doorways, taking vantage of the light,
Sit here and there a figure, busy still
With flying fingers, weaving spider thread
To faery patterns of Valenciennes.
Children are laughing ; by the tiny brook
They wander, playing, teasing, now and then
Tossing a pebble at a darting minnow,
Till women voices, high-pitched to attract,

Soldier Poets

Cry Jacques, Noel or Pierre, when quietude
Comes to the rippling stream, drifting sounds
Of laughter only echoing from the doors
Subdued in harmony.

Peace and goodwill are the master tones
Brooding on the happy evening scene :
The men, seated beneath the café windows,
Talk, jest and laugh, with tinkling glass or mug,
And smoke their red clay pipes, sweet smelling
smoke

Of home-cured leaf, rising in pearly clouds :
Whilst women, some still toiling at their lace,
Gossip, the elder matrons of their homes,
Girlhood as all girls will, so why say more ?
For Madeleine, the minx, is missing. Where ?
Henri, the cobbler's son, has vanished too,
Strong evidence enough for village life.

Suddenly the Curé, going to evensong,
Comes from underneath the shadowed trees,
A pleasant word for all, a cheery smile,
And in return due reverence and faith :
Thus softly the twilight deepens into night,
Boy and girl have, whispering, passed their way
To the security of scented lanes

H. Smalley Sarson

To dream,—sweet fancies which the young enjoy,
The last thrush whistles in a distant copse,
As, only by the glowing of a pipe,
A smothered laugh, a restless infant's cry,
Is the blue silence of the Heavens broken
To show the stars humanity still lives.

The Village

1915

THE shrieking of a thousand maddened furies
Riding the air, a violent thunder-clap,
Sharp vivid stabs of flame ; then falling bricks
And silence : deep, deep silence of the dead.
No other creature but a scurrying rat
Is seen, even the sparrows that last year
In cheeky self-assurance chirped about
Have gone their way and left the desolate place.
In May the martins came again, to build
Their tiny homes on last year's site, but found
The sheltering eaves where they had taken refuge
Strewn on the ground.

Those scarred and tumbling walls
Once were the church, yet might have been an inn

Soldier Poets

For all the signs of reverence they show,
Save that in the encircling shady yard,
Heaped with scattered stone, the uprooted graves
And broken crosses speak of holier days :
The nave, choked with charred rafters from the
 roof,
Pleads untended to the wind and rain
Mutely ; shelter even bats despise.

Standing stricken, the weary shrapnelled houses
Seem skeletons, grim and ghastly shapes
Beckoning with scraggy fingers to the sky
In silent plea for justice. A window gapes,
Laughing in mockery the frame still holds,
Grinning its execration.

 No solid roof
Stands to offer hiding to a dog,
Whilst in the rooms that once were clean and white,
Midst the accumulating broken tiles,
Grasses and weeds already have their hold
Encroaching from the garden.
The road itself is seamed, pock-marked with holes
Where you might hide ten men, nor see their heads,
Those near the tiny stream filled to the brim
With dank and turbid water, in greening slime
The bloated body of a puny kitten
Floats, decayed and foul.

H. Smalley Sarson

So everywhere
When yester-year found peace and happiness
Now death prowling lurks in gruesome power ;
The thrushes sing no longer in the woods,
Whilst over all there meditates and broods
The sovereign cruelty of war.

To Sister E. W.

YOU gave me a white carnation :
Was it in sympathy ?
And did you know the flower meant
Youth's glad world to me ?

A simple white carnation.
Yet you seemed to understand
What I craved was a woman's smile,
The touch of a gentle hand,

So you gave me a white carnation—
'Twas a foolish thing to do,
For whenever I see carnations now
I shall always think of you.

ST. OMER, *June*, 1915.

Soldier Poets

The Shell

SHRIEKING its message the flying death
Cursed the resisting air,
Then buried its nose by a battered church,
A skeleton gaunt and bare.

The brains of science, the money of fools
Had fashioned an iron slave
Destined to kill, yet the futile end
Was a child's uprooted grave.

C. H. SORLEY

CAPTAIN, 7TH S. BATTALION, SUFFOLK REGIMENT

Fragments

We have the privilege of printing two fragments of verse by Captain C. H. Sorley, whose volume, *Marlborough, and Other Poems*, was published—a fine memorial to a brave spirit—shortly after he was killed in action in October, 1915. Other literary remains not included in this volume (excepting the following) are not yet available. The Sonnet—now first printed—was written in 1911, when the writer was about 16, and is much earlier than anything printed hitherto. The *Faust* lines are taken from a letter written in December, 1914, while in training. They are preceded by the words, “I think that Germany, in spite of her vast bigotry and blindness, is in a kind of way living up to the motto that Goethe left her in the closing words of *Faust* before he died.”

The original lines from *Faust* are appended, as they show how ingeniously he combines the separate passages into a single piece (making the transition by following the change in the sequence of rhyme which is in the original). The translation is almost literal, but has a swing of its own which makes it worthy of comparison with the original.

FAUST—Part II

(Lines 6944-7)

AY, in this thought is my whole life's persistence,
This is the whole conclusion of the true :
He only owns his Freedom, owns Existence,
Who every day must conquer her anew.

Soldier Poets

(*Lines 6820-3*)

So let him journey through his earthly day,
'Mid hustling spirits, go his self-found way,
Find torture, bliss, in every forward stride,
He, every moment still unsatisfied.

FAUST—Part II

Ja ! diesem Sinne bin ich ganz ergeben,
Das ist der Weisheit letzter Schluss :
Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben,
Der taglich sie erobern muss.

Er wandle so den Erdentag entlang ;
Wenn Geister spuken, geh' er seiner gang ;
Im Weiterschreiten find 'er Qual und Gluck,
Er, unbefriedigt jeden Augenlick !

Prometheus Vincit Loquitur

FAR from the farthest bounds of earth—a land
Where never yet hath foot of mortal trod,
Illimitable, pathless—here, a god
God-bound, god-tortured, god-consumed I stand.
All day the sun beats down upon the sand
Scorching the listless air ; and all the night
The moon gleams cold with pale impassive light
Holding an icy sway—and still I stand !

C. H. Sorley

And let me stand so and defy them all !

The martyr's exultation leaps in me,
And I am joyous, joyous. He shall fall,

And I, whom he hath trampled on, shall see
His utter desolation : great that fall

From heaven's height to hell's iniquity !

H. SPURRIER
PRIVATE, ROYAL WARWICKS
Wounded at La Bassée

The Charge at Neuve-Chapelle

THE charge we made at Neuve-Chapelle
When Fate the die had cast
Was like the lightning of the clouds
As bursts the thunder-blast.
Not least among the records red
For that disastrous year,
Of trenches won and lost again,
Its annals shall appear.

Great battles have been waged and won
Of more momentous power,
When Earth within the balance swung
In sanguinary hour.
But redder morn did never rise
Than on that doubtful day,
Through Death and wire-entanglement
We wrought resistless way.

Along our line the rumour ran
And leaped from lip to lip,
Till that terrific call of blood
Had got us all in grip.

H. Spurrier

To raise a cheer we didn't dare
Although our blood was fire,
But waited for the signal word
That would not be "retire."

At last it came like liquid flame
And flooded down the trench.
" ' C ' Company, advance and charge
We gave our limbs a wrench,
And leaped upon the parapet
And flung a flaunting shout,
As though the fatal Fiends of War
Were boisterous and about.

Some furlongs four we had to run
And Hell did intervene ;
A Death that rode invisible,
An Agony unseen.
At every step a comrade fell,
Nor face of foe we saw.
Fell young Lieutenant Anderson
And gallant Captain Shaw.

Yet on we rushed and never paused,
For death was in delay,
Yet nearer, nearer to our goal,
The debt of blood to pay,

Soldier Poets

Our bayonets glinting in the sun,
Our faces fierce and white,
With sobbing breath and staring eye,
Yet bright with battle-light.

Then shouted Sergeant-Major Jones—
“ On, lads, and follow me ! ”
We gave a hoarse and broken cheer
And swept to VICTORY.
Right through that belch of roaring death,
Amidst the fiery drench,
Hacked through their wire-entanglement,
And leaped and took the trench.

The Guerdon

THE dews that descend with the dawning ;
The stars that are smitten by light,
At Phoebus' feet fainting and fawning ;
The flowers that unfold in delight ;
The lark who a lyric is trilling
O'er woodland and hollow and hill ;
The streams who their fountains are filling,
No peace can instil.

H. Spurrier

No peace for the love that must languish ;
No hope for the heart that is dead ;
No salve for the soul in her anguish,
To memories immortally wed.
The passion and pulse of to-morrow
Will waken a thousand to joy,
A thousand to labour and sorrow,
But not, not my boy.

Methought in the night that his prattle
Came sweet from the tombs of dead time,
'Ere flashed on my vision the battle,
The ruin, the horror, the crime.
His eyes they were wistful with wonder,
His cheeks they were rosy to kiss,
His lips they were parted asunder,
And his smile was bliss.

And then the blind hell that envelops
Two armed and unpitying hates,
When Death to the banquet-hall gallops,
And man is the mock of the Fates.
I saw him—Oh, God ! can I utter
What burned through mine eyelids like fire ?—
Dead, dead like a dog in a gutter,
Bleeding in mire.

Soldier Poets

His eyes they were opened to Heaven,
His curls they were clotted with mud,
His limbs they were ravaged and riven,
His lips had a frothing of blood.
Yet clear to my soul spake his spirit,
As scorning the fetters of Fate,
As one whom the might and the merit
Of living crowned late.

Weep not for thy children, O mother.
Wail not for thy husband, O wife.
Let brother not mourn for a brother
Who fell in the foam of the strife.
For Pain we had looked long upon her,
And danger and Death were as wine ;
And glory is ours, we have won her,
O mother of mine.

JOHN WILLIAM STREETS

SERGT., 12TH YORK AND LANCASTERS (B.E.F., FRANCE)

Wounded and missing, July, 1916

Youth's Consecration

"These verses were inspired while I was in the trenches, where I have been so busy that I have had little time to polish them. I have tried to picture some thoughts that pass through a man's brain when he dies. I may not see the end of the poem, but hope to live to do so. We soldiers have our views of life to express, though the boom of death is in our ears. We try to convey something of what we feel in this great conflict to those who think of us, and sometimes, alas! mourn our loss. We desire to let them know that in the midst of our keenest sadness for the joy of life we leave behind we go to meet death grim-lipped, clear-eyed, and resolute-hearted."

LOVERS of Life, dreamers with lifted eyes,
O Liberty, at thy command we challenge Death!
The monuments that tell our fathers' faith
Shall be the altars of our sacrifice.
Dauntless we fling our lives into the van,
Laughing at death, because within Youth's breast
Flame lambent fires of Freedom; man for man
We yield to thee our heritage, our best.
Life's highest product youth exults in Life;
We are Olympian gods in consciousness;
Mortality to us is sweet, yet less
We value Ease when Honour sounds the strife.
Lovers of life, we pledge thee, Liberty,
And go to death calmly, triumphantly!

Soldier Poets

At Dawn in France

NIGHT on the plains, and the stars unfold
The cycle of night in splendour old ;
The winds are hushed, on the fire-swept hill
All is silent, shadowy, still—
Silent, yet tense as a harp high-strung
By a master bard for deeds unsung.
Slowly across the shadowy night
Tremble the shimmering wings of light,
And men with vigil in their eyes
And a fever light that never dies—
Men from the city, hamlet, town,
Once white faces tanned to brown,—
Stand to the watch of the parapet
And watch, with rifles, bayonets set,
For the great unknown that comes to men
Swift as the light : sudden, then—

Dawn ! the light from its shimmering wings
Lights up their faces with strange, strange things :
Strange thoughts of love, of death and life,
Serenity 'mid sanguine strife :—
Dreams of life where the feet of youth
Rush to the pinnacles of Truth ;
Where early dreams with pinions fleet
Rush to find a love complete ;

John William Streets

Of Love and Youth 'neath rosy bowers
Sensuous, mad with the wine-filled hours,
Flushed with hope and joy's delight,
Weaving rapture from the night :—
Visions of death where the harp is still
And the sun sets swiftly behind youth's hill ;
Where the song is hushed and the light is dead
And the man lies with the remembered ;
Where Memory weaves a paradise,
A mother's face, her tender eyes,
Her suffering for the child she gave,
Her love unbroken by the grave ;
Where shadows gather o'er the bliss,
The rapture of a bridal kiss :—
Yet dreams where Youth (sublimity !)
Doth thrill to give for Liberty
Its love, its hope, its radiant morn,
Doth thrill to die for the yet unborn,
To die and pay the utmost price
And save its ideals thro' the sacrifice.

Thus at dawn do the watchers dream
Of life and death, of love supreme :
Flushed with the dawn, hope in each breast,
Their faces turn to the starless west :
Thus at dawn do the watches think
Resolute-hearted upon death's brink
With a strange, proud look on every face—
The *scorn* of Death, the *pride* of race.

Soldier Poets

Love of Life

REACH out thy hands, thy spirit's hands, to me
And pluck the youth, the magic from my
heart—

Magic of dreams whose sensibility
Is plumèd like the light ; visions that start
Mad pressure in the blood ; desire that thrills
The soul with mad delight : to yearning wed
All slothfulness of life ; draw from its bed
The soul of dawn across the twilight hills.
Reach out thy hands, O spirit, till I feel
That I am fully thine ; for I shall live
In the proud consciousness that thou dost give,
And if thy twilight fingers round me steal
And draw me unto death—thy votary
Am I, O Life, reach out thy hands to me !

An English Soldier

HE died for love of race ; because the blood
Of northern freemen swelled his veins ; arose
True to tradition that like mountain stood
Impregnable, crown'd with its pathless snows.
When broke the call, from the sepulchred years
Strong voices urged and stirr'd his soul to life ;

John William Streets

The call of English freemen fled his fears
And led him (their true son) into the strife.
There in the van he fought thro' many a dawn,
Stood by the forlorn hope, knew victory ;
Proud, scorning Death, fought with a purpose drawn
Sword-edged, defiant, grand, for Liberty.
He fell ; but yielded not his English soul—
That lives out there beneath the battle's roll.

A Soldiers' Cemetery

BEHIND that long and lonely trenched line
To which men come and go, where brave
men die,
There is a yet unmarked and unknown shrine,
A broken plot, a soldiers' cemetery.
There lie the flower of youth, the men who scorn'd
To live (so died) when languished Liberty :
Across their graves flowerless and unadorned
Still scream the shells of each artillery.
When war shall cease : this lonely unknown spot
Of many a pilgrimage will be the end,
And flowers will shine in this now barren plot
And fame upon it through the years descend :
But many a heart upon each simple cross
Will hang the grief, the memory of its loss.

Soldier Poets

A Lark above the Trenches

HUSHED is the shriek of hurtling shells : and
hark !

Somewhere within that bit of deep blue sky,

Grand in his loneliness, his ecstasy,

His lyric wild and free, carols a lark.

I in the trench, he lost in heaven afar ;

I dream of love, its ecstasy he sings ;

Both lure my soul to love till, like a star,

It flashes into life : O tireless wings

That beat love's message into melody—

A song that touches in this place remote

Gladness supreme in its undying note,

And stirs to life the soul of memory—

'Tis strange that while you're beating into life

Men here below are plunged in sanguine strife.

GILBERT WATERHOUSE

LIEUT., 2ND ESSEX

The Casualty Clearing Station

A BOWL of daffodils,
A crimson-quilted bed,
Sheets and pillows white as snow—
White and gold and red—
And sisters moving to and fro,
With soft and silent tread.

So all my spirit fills
With pleasure infinite,
And all the feathered wings of rest
Seem flocking from the radiant West
To bear me thro' the night.

See, how they close me in,
They, and the sisters' arms,
One eye is closed, the other lid
Is watching how my spirit slid
Toward some red-roofed farms,
And having crept beneath them, slept
Secure from war's alarms.

E. F. WILKINSON, M.C.
LIEUT., 1/8th BATTALION, WEST YORKS. (LEEDS RIFLES)

Dad o' Mine

MIDSUMMER-DAY, and the mad world
a-fighting,
Fighting in holes, Dad o' Mine.
Nature's old spells are no longer delighting
Passion-filled souls, Dad o' Mine.
Vainly the birds in the branches are singing,
Vainly the sunshine its message is bringing,
Over the green-clad earth stark hate is flinging
Shadow for shine, Dad o' Mine,
Shadow for shine.

No one dare prophesy when comes an end to it,
End to the strife, Dad o' Mine.
When we can take joy and once again bend to it
What's left of life, Dad o' Mine.
Yet for one day we'll let all slip behind us,
So that your birthday, Dad, still may remind us
How strong yet supple the bonds are that bind us
Through shade and shine, Dad o' Mine,
Through shade and shine.

E. F. Wilkinson, M.C.

Leagues lie between us, but leagues cannot sever
Links forged by Love, Dad o' Mine,
Bonds of his binding are fast bound forever,
Future will prove, Dad o' Mine.
Your strength was mine since I first lisped your
 name, Dad,
Your thoughts were my thoughts at lesson or game,
 Dad,
In childhood's griefs, it was ever the same, Dad,
Your hand round mine, Dad o' Mine,
Your hand round mine.

Strengthened by shadow and shine borne together,
Comrades and chums, Dad o' mine,
We shall not falter thro' fair or foul weather,
Whatever comes, Dad o' Mine.
So in the years to be when you grow older,
Age puts his claims in and weakness grows bolder;
We'll stand up and meet them, Dad, shoulder to
 shoulder,
Your arm in mine, Dad o' mine,
Your arm in mine.

Soldier Poets

To "My People," before the "Great Offensive"

DARK with uncertainty of doubtful doom
The future looms across the path we tread ;
Yet, undismayed we gaze athwart the gloom,
Prophetically tinged with hectic red.
The mutterings of conflict, sullen, deep,
Surge over homes where hopeless tears are shed,
And ravens their ill-omened vigils keep
O'er legions dead.

But louder, deeper, fiercer still shall be
The turmoil and the rush of furious feet,
The roar of war shall roll from sea to sea,
And on the sea, where fleet engages fleet.
Then fortunate who can, unharmed, depart
From that last field where Right and Wrong shall
meet.
If then, amidst some millions more, this heart
Should cease to beat,—

Mourn not for me too sadly ; I have been,
For months of an exalted life, a King ;

E. F. Wilkinson, M.C.

Peer for these months of those whose graves grow
green

Where'er the borders of our empire fling
Their mighty arms. And if the crown is death,
Death while I'm fighting for my home and king,
Thank God the son who drew from you his breath
To death could bring

A not entirely worthless sacrifice,
Because of those brief months when life meant more
Than selfish pleasures. Grudge not then the price,
But say, "Our country in the storm of war
Has found him fit to fight and die for her,"
And lift your heads in pride for evermore.
But when the leaves the evening breezes stir
Close not the door.

For if there's any consciousness to follow
The deep, deep slumber that we know as Death,
If Death and Life are not all vain and hollow,
If Life is more than so much indrawn breath,
Then in the hush of twilight I shall come—
One with immortal Life, that knows not Death
But ever changes form—I shall come home ;
Although, beneath

Soldier Poets

A wooden cross the clay that once was I
Has ta'en its ancient earthy form anew.
But listen to the wind that hurries by,
To all the Song of Life for tones you knew.
For in the voice of birds, the scent of flowers,
The evening silence and the falling dew,
Through every throbbing pulse of nature's powers
I'll speak to you.



**This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building**

[illegible]

